DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 728 UD 030 412

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TITLE Review of Research on School Desegregation's Impact on Elementary and Secondary School Students.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 20p.; Chapter 33 in the "Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education," p597-616. See UD 030 379.
AVAILABLE FROM Individual chapters not available separately.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students; Cultural Differences; *Desegregation Effects; *Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; Integration Studies; Intergroup Relations; Literature Reviews; Outcomes of Education; *Research Methodology; Research Problems; *School Desegregation; *Secondary School Students; White Students
IDENTIFIERS African Americans

ABSTRACT

The widespread concern about the impact of school desegregation and the controversy over what its effect might be have resulted in a substantial body of research. This review focuses on the impact on students themselves, presenting some conclusions that have emerged and discussing some methodological problems inherent in the assessment of the impact on students. These problems include deciding on the relevant studies, recognizing the implications of diversity, and facing the reality that much of the research is flawed. Research does suggest that desegregation has had some positive impacts on the reading skills of African American youngsters. Mathematics skills seem generally unaffected by desegregation. There is also some evidence that desegregation can help to break what can be thought of as the generational cycle of segregation and racial isolation. Evidence is beginning to accumulate that school desegregation may favorably influence such adult outcomes as college graduation, income, and employment patterns. Evidence about the impact of desegregation on intergroup relations is generally held to be inconclusive, but some positive effects are indicated. In addition, it is clear that the way in which desegregation is brought about can have effects on student outcomes. (Contains 232 references.) (SLD)

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